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Teaching
OF THE MEMORIAM



Merley Stevenson.

*THE SPIRITUAL TEACHING OF
TENNYSON'S "IN MEMORIAM."*

By the same Author.

THE SPIRITUAL TEACHING
OF
THE HOLY GRAIL.

SIX LENTEN ADDRESSES.

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"This is an unusual form in which to present Lent teaching, and a very delightful one. We are sure those who listened to these simple and beautiful and spiritual addresses found themselves not only edified so far as the life of their souls was concerned, but also greatly helped in their appreciation of what is perhaps the most beautiful portion of the Arthurian legend."—*Guardian*.

LONDON :
WELLS GARDNER, DARTON & Co.

The Spiritual Teaching
OF
Tennyson's "In Memoriam."

SIX LENTEN ADDRESSES.

BY THE
REV. MORLEY STEVENSON, M.A.,
PRINCIPAL OF WARRINGTON TRAINING COLLEGE.

London :
WELLS GARDNER, DARTON & Co.,
3, PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS.

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TO
MY DEAR COUSIN
AND LIFE-LONG FRIEND,
ANNA COLE,
I DEDICATE
THIS LITTLE BOOK.

PREFACE.

THE kind reception accorded to my addresses on "The Holy Grail" emboldens me to publish these addresses on "In Memoriam."

They were delivered in substance in the Churches of St. Margaret's, Prince's Road, Liverpool, in St. Mary's, Grassendale, and in the Chapel of the Training College, Warrington, in Lent, 1904, but they have been revised, and some additions made. I have consulted several books, and, I hope, have acknowledged all the quotations I have made.

It would, however, be ungrateful if I did not specially mention the great help I have received from Mr. Masterman's thoughtful work, "Tennyson, as a Religious Teacher."

The subjects suggested by "In Memoriam" must always be of the deepest interest

to all thoughtful people. It is with fear and reverence that one ventures to write on Death and the Future Life, or to approach the problems of Sorrow and Suffering.

I can only hope that these thoughts inspired by our great poet may be of some small use and comfort to those who are kind enough to read them.

My grateful acknowledgments are due to Messrs. Macmillan for their courteous permission to quote so freely from various poems of Tennyson.

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“In Memoriam.”

I.—Sorrow and Suffering.

“IN 1850,” says the late Mr. Gladstone, “Tennyson gave to the world, under the title of ‘In Memoriam,’ perhaps the richest oblation ever offered by the affection of friendship at the tomb of the departed.”

“The poem raised him above all the poets of his time, and the book was appreciated, read and loved by the greater part of the English-speaking world.”

True as this judgment is, the value of this poem does not consist only in the marvellous exhibition of true friendship which it portrays but in the deep thoughts of a great thinker—a seer—on some of those

subjects which are of the gravest import to every thoughtful person.

The underlying theme is that old story of sorrow, suffering and perplexity which has been told and is being told in varying degrees in every human life, gradually working itself out, as it ought always to do, into resignation, peace, trust, and a sure and certain hope of and for the future.

The poem was written in memory of Tennyson's great friend, Arthur Hallam, who died suddenly and unexpectedly at the early age of twenty-two.

"His powers seemed so exceptional that his father"—the great historian—"who was of all literary men the most sober and balanced in his judgments, imagined him capable of the greatest things. It was thought that a splendid future was before him, and his loss seemed to his friends to be a loss to all mankind."¹

In stanzas 109—113 we may read the

¹ Stopford Brooke.

poet's glowing description of his friend.
His was

“A life that all the Muses deck'd
With gifts of grace, that might express
All-comprehensive tenderness,
All-subtilizing intellect.”

His was

“High nature amorous of the good,
But touch'd with no ascetic gloom.”

Of him Tennyson says—

“Thy converse drew us with delight,
The men of rathe and riper years :
The feeble soul, a haunt of fears,
Forgot his weakness in thy sight.

On thee the loyal-hearted hung,
The proud was half disarm'd of pride,
Nor cared the serpent at thy side
To flicker with his double tongue.

The stern were mild when thou wert by,
The flippant put himself to school
And heard thee, and the brazen fool
Was soften'd and he knew not why.”

The friendship between Tennyson and
Hallam was of an intensity rarely found

in modern life. "All their thoughts, dreams, and aspirations, for the present and the future, were shared together. It seemed an affection that might defy the shocks of time and the finger of change. Then something intervened ; the ' fair companionship ' was broken ; and the man he loved was suddenly hurried out of sight. Death was striking visibly in a manner which drove his whole being into revolt and fierce protest ; not coming as a welcome friend at the close of the long day's toil, to round off and complete a well-spent life ; not as the reply to persistent prayer for relief from the burden of existence ; but unasked for and unbidden, defying, mocking, as it were, the intensity of the love between them, striking at the ' human-hearted man ' with all his genius just unfolding, with unfathomed possibilities, with limitless affections and ambitions and desires, stricken down without warning, and swept into the darkness without a cry. One moment the two spirits

were growing together without a barrier between them; the next one had disappeared for ever and no answer remained.”¹

The loss of such a friend was a terrible blow to Tennyson, and for a while, as we learn from his biography, “blotted out all joy from his life.” Hallam’s remains were brought to England and buried at Clevedon in Somersetshire, the Church of which place overlooks a wide expanse of water where the Severn flows into the Bristol Channel.

A well-known and exquisite little poem tells us something of Tennyson’s grief:—

“Break, break, break
On thy cold, gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman’s boy
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O well for the sailor lad
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

¹ Masterman.

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And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill,
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand
And the sound of a voice that is still !
Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea !
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me."

When we come to the study of "In Memoriam" we must remember that it is not so much a poem as a collection of poems, written at different times, and yet fitly linked together as forming a complete work, through which may be traced the poet's conviction that sorrow, suffering and doubt will find answer and gain relief only through faith in a GOD of Love.

It will not be profitable therefore to consider the poem in the order in which its stanzas are written, but rather to listen to the lessons which it has to teach us on certain subjects, while at the same time we keep in mind the gradual progress which we ought to perceive, the pilgrimage of the

soul from the depths of sorrow and doubt into the light of faith and the security of hope.

Indeed, the idea of the poem can hardly be described better than in the words in which the Psalmist depicts the life of those who go down to the sea in ships :

“ They are carried up to the heaven, and down again to the deep ; their soul melteth away because of the trouble : they reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits’ end. So when they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, He delivereth them out of their distress ; for He maketh the storm to cease, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad thereof, because they are at rest, and so He bringeth them unto the haven where they would be.” ¹

Our subject to-day is Sorrow and Suffering. The poem opens with the portrayal of the anguish caused by the loss of the poet’s friend.

¹ Psalm cvii. 26-30.

In the second stanza he sees in the yew tree an image of stubborn sorrow. The old Churchyard yew, which seems to keep its sombre foliage unchanged for centuries, and unmoved by all the changes of the different seasons, is a fit emblem of that sorrow and gloom which seem as if they would wrap round him for evermore.

In the next stanza it appears to him as if sorrow, "Priestess in the vaults of death," had distorted all Nature, as if all things had been created in vain.

"A hollow form with empty hands." Even in his sleep (stanza 4) "Clouds of nameless trouble cross his eyes."

The first deep plunge into a great sorrow produces a state of grief which seems overwhelming. We read of such sorrow as that of Jacob at the loss of his favourite son, when "all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him ; but he refused to be comforted " ; or of David at the death of Absalom ; we listen sympathetically to the pathos of his words,

“Would GOD that I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son”; or we witness great sorrow in others, we note the traces of grief in their faces, the chastened submission of their lives, and our hearts are stirred with compassion; or we go to Church and join in the recitation of the Psalter, and repeat glibly those marvellous descriptions of anguish and sorrow. Yet for us life is on the whole bright and happy; we do not realize what sorrow really means. At last the blow falls, perhaps unexpectedly, suddenly, and in a moment we understand what grief really is, and it almost seems as if life were no longer worth the living, as if there could be no more happiness in this world. The sombre character of the yew must be ours for ever: our life must be dark, gloomy and cold.

Nor can the well-meant attempts at consolation offered in the commonplace stock phrases of the world be of any avail to comfort us.

“One writes that ‘Other friends remain,’
 That ‘Loss is common to the race’—
 And common is the commonplace
 And vacant chaff well meant for grain.

‘That loss is common would not make
 My own less bitter, rather more :
 Too common ! Never morning wore
 To evening, but some heart did break.’

* * * * *

O somewhere, meek unconscious dove,
 That sittest ranging golden hair :
 And glad to find thyself so fair,
 Poor child, that waitest for thy love !

For now her father’s chimney glows
 In expectation of a guest :
 And thinking ‘this will please him best,’
 She takes a riband or a rose ;

For he will see them on to-night ;
 And with the thought her colour burns ;
 And, having left the glass, she turns
 Once more to set a ringlet right :

And, even when she turn’d, the curse
 Had fallen, and her future lord
 Was drown’d in passing through the ford,
 Or kill’d in falling from his horse.

O what to her shall be the end?
 And what to me remains of good?
 To her, perpetual maidenhood,
 And unto me no second friend."

(*Stanza 6.*)

This is the very depth of sorrow, which no human consolation can assuage.

Let us then approach this mystery with all humility and reverence, and seek for some lines of thought which may help us to see in what spirit we may best meet the trial.

First, we must try to understand that sorrow and suffering have a distinct work to do for individuals in particular and for the world in general ; that even our Saviour Himself was made " perfect through suffering," thereby setting an example for His people ; that suffering is the chastisement, the loving discipline which the Father knows to be necessary for the child. When we once grasp this truth, then we see that sorrow and suffering are not to plunge us into sullen despair, but are to educate us

in holiness and to form our character in sanctity, that they are the chisel which is to let the angel out from the rough block of our life, and hammer out the image and likeness of GOD, which has been overlaid and disfigured by sin.

Secondly, we must learn to accept the truth that "GOD is Love," and that GOD is "our Father." This was Tennyson's solution of the problem, and his message to the world. He was able to sum up his great poem in the words, "Strong Son of GOD, Immortal Love."

When once we accept this, then "through all the mysteries of suffering and sin and death we can follow the beam of light which lit upon the world in the life and the Cross of Jesus, to the truth of the divine love beyond them. In the joy of human love, of the sunshine and the sea, and the streams and the birds, we can rejoice in it; but in the sadness and sorrow of things we can trust it. We can endure as still seeing the love which in them may

be invisible. . . . Once convinced that GOD is Love, a man can go straight ahead upon his way. He is master of his falls, for he knows that he can rise. He is master even of the blows that seem to strike him, for they cannot overthrow him. He bows his head in submission ; but his spirit rises as he says, ‘ I believe in the love of GOD.’ ” ¹

The calm peace which had come to Tennyson through his faith in GOD as a GOD of love may be well seen in stanza 126—

“ Love is and was my Lord and King,
And in His presence I attend
To hear the tidings of my friend,
Which every hour his couriers bring.

Love is and was my King and Lord,
And will be, tho’ as yet I keep
Within His court on earth, and sleep
Encompass’d by His faithful guard.

And hear at times a sentinel
Who moves about from place to place,
And whispers to the worlds of space,
In the deep night that all is well.”

¹ Bishop Lang.

Thirdly, Time is a great healer. After the first great shock of grief we realize that with all the work which is waiting to be done it is pure selfishness to shut ourselves up and indulge in the luxury of sorrow. Thus, if we are wise, we pass into the daily round of duty ; we let ourselves glide into the interests of life, above all we take up GOD'S work as it is shown to us, and throw ourselves earnestly into it. Then does Time do her gentle work, and we are surprised to feel the gradual but sure healing of the wound.

This is most strikingly brought out in "In Memoriam." For as we date the different parts of the poem we can notice the change from the sullen grief at its beginning to the calm resignation and assured hope at its close.

The opening stanzas express the depth of sorrow, but with the exquisite 19th stanza, referring to the remains of the poet's departed friend being brought to England

to his home on the Severn, we note that the cloud begins to lift—

“The Danube to the Severn gave
The darken'd heart that beat no more ;
They laid him by the pleasant shore,
And in the hearing of the wave.

There twice a day the Severn fills :
The salt sea-water passes by,
And hushes half the babbling Wye,
And makes a silence in the hills.

The Wye is hush'd nor moved along,
And hush'd my deepest grief of all,
When fill'd with tears that cannot fall,
I brim with sorrow drowning song.

The tide flows down, the wave again
Is vocal in its wooded walls ;
My deeper anguish also falls,
And I can speak a little then.”

Passing on again to the concluding verse of the 27th stanza, we read—

“I hold it true, whate'er befall :
I feel it, when I sorrow most :
'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.”

One more quotation out of many that

could be quoted must serve to illustrate this point. The 116th stanza, near the close of the poem, shows how his sorrow has been soothed without lessening the love he feels—

“Is it, then, regret for buried time
That keenlier in sweet April wakes,
And meets the year, and gives and takes
The colours of the crescent prime?

Not all; the songs, the stirring air,
The life re-orient out of dust,
Cry thro’ the sense to hearten trust
In that which made the world so fair.

Not all regret: the face will shine
Upon me, while I muse alone:
And that dear voice, I once have known,
Still speak to me of me and mine;

Yet less of sorrow lives in me
For days of happy commune dead;
Less yearning for the friendship fled,
Than some strong bond which is to be.”

Thus, if we accept sorrow and suffering as sent by GOD for a special and good purpose, sent also by One Who is not only All-powerful but also All-loving, we may

then expect the gradual healing of the sorrow wrought by time, and aided by the unselfish going forth from oneself to the duties which lie around us and to work for others.

“I will not shut me from my kind,
 And lest I stiffen into stone,
 I will not eat my heart alone,
 Nor feed with sighs a passing wind.”
 (*Stanza 108.*)

This, of course, is not the teaching of the world. The world bids us drown sorrow in pleasure, in licentiousness, in evil. The world laughs to scorn any attempt to wear the crown of thorns, and refuses to see any good that can come from sorrow and suffering; but the crown of suffering confers its own blessings, though these are unintelligible to the world. This is beautifully expressed in the 69th stanza—

“I wander’d from the noisy town,
 I found a wood with thorny boughs :
 I took the thorns to bind my brows
 I wore them like a civic crown :

I met with scoffs, I met with scorns
From youth and babe and hoary hairs :
They call'd me in the public squares
The fool that wears a crown of thorns :
They call'd me fool, they call'd me child :
I found an angel of the night :
The voice was low, the look was bright :
He look'd upon my crown and smil'd.
He reach'd the glory of a hand,
That seem'd to touch it into leaf :
The voice was not the voice of grief,
The words were hard to understand."

What amount of sorrow and suffering it may please GOD to send into our lives is unknown to us. We only know that "whom He loveth, He chasteneth," and "He purgeth the branch that it may bring forth more fruit"; but come when it may, and how it may, if we will patiently wear our crown of thorns, the hand that gave it in love will "touch it into leaf," though the reason may be "hard to understand."

But there is one species of sorrow that no Christian should ever shrink from, and

that is the penitential sorrow for sin.

How little we modern Christians realize our sinfulness! How unreal to us is the penitential language of the saints! We cannot, with St. Paul, call ourselves "the chief of sinners," nor, to come to our own times, can we use the language of such an one as John Keble. In these days we sin lightly and easily, thinking little of it, and sorrowing little for it.

And yet "our growth depends on our continuance in penitence; and the growth will only go forward according to the measure with which our growing penitence admits of it.

"And still each admitted act of grace by which we are succoured and uplifted purges our blighted eyes, so that we can see a little further into the mystery of Divine Love, and as we see more of the Love we see, too, a little more into our own outrage upon it, our own ingratitude to it, our own disregard of it, our own scandalous defeat of it: and our shame is therefore deeper,

and our plea for pardon more real, and our power of repentance more vivid and sincere. And this, again, drives us out in recoil upon GOD, Who ever pardons and absolves ; and we cry to Him with a louder voice, and we weep more bitter tears, and we cling to Him the faster as we realize our impotence, and we lie open, with less obstruction than before, to the incoming of His pity, and become capable of a larger spiritual gift, which, again, lays more bare our own spiritual infirmity. . . .

“ This is the spiritual process, which increases in intensity as the soul advances in apprehension of GOD, so that we are to spend our whole lives in putting an ever-deepening significance into the confession with which we begin, ‘ Have mercy upon us miserable sinners.’

“ When we first said it we were but as children, sobbing for some blind and intangible misery. The gathering years bring us the realities of experience, by which we can give shape and substance to

our sense of guilt; and the confession therefore grows more urgent, more articulate, more keen. And only by degrees, under slow and bitter pressure, do we actually learn to enter, trembling and astonished, into the mysterious depths of sorrow which lie behind the language of these unknown penitents, whose words may have been on our lips from our childhood." ¹

Grant to me, Lord, pardon for my past sins, grace to resist present temptations, and watchfulness for the future. Let not my days be ended before my sins are forgiven; but grant that before I die I may fully attain to Thy mercy: and as Thou wilt and as Thou knowest, have mercy upon me, O Lord.

¹ Scott Holland.

II.—*Death and the Future State.*

WE pass now to learn what our poem has to teach us about Death and the Future. We shall be able to trace the same process of growth in thought, as in our last lecture. Death first presents itself as an evil, an act of separation which fills the cup of bitterness to the full. As the poem goes on the poet learns that Death is working for good until at its close he is content to look forward to the future, secure in the love of that friend whom he believes he shall see once more.

It would be hardly possible to express in more tender pathos the bitterness of the separation caused by death than in the 22nd stanza—

“The path by which we twain did go
Which led by tracts that pleased us well,
Thro’ four sweet years arose and fell,
From flower to flower and snow to snow :

DEATH AND THE FUTURE STATE. 23

And we with singing cheered the way,
And, crown'd with all the season lent,
From April on to April went,
And glad at heart from May to May :

But where the path we walk'd began
To slant the fifth autumnal slope,
As we descended following Hope
There sat the shadow fear'd of man :

Who broke our fair companionship,
And spread his mantle dark and cold,
And wrapt thee formless in the fold,
And dull'd the murmur on thy lip,

And bore thee where I could not see
Nor follow tho' I walk in haste,
And think, that somewhere in the waste
The Shadow sits and waits for me."

It is the thought of separation which is the most bitter part of his trial. He tells us in the 82nd stanza that he could have forgiven Death anything else, such as

"Changes wrought on form and face,"

but the separation of himself and his friend he finds it hard to pardon.

“For this alone on Death I wreak
The wrath that garners in my heart :
He put our lives so far apart
We cannot hear each other speak.”

But although this terrible feeling of separation adds so much to his grief he has a firm belief in the future life and in the existence of the dead in a state of peace and consciousness.

Thus, in the 38th stanza, after the keeping of the first Christmas Day since his friend's death, and the gradual cessation of game and song as the thought of the departed made itself felt, he goes on—

“We ceased ; a gentler feeling crept
Upon us : surely rest is meet :
‘They rest,’ we said, ‘their sleep is sweet,’
And silence followed and we wept.

Our voices took a higher range :
Once more we sang : ‘They do not die
Nor lose their mortal sympathy,
Nor change to us, although they change.’”

Tennyson felt very strongly that this

life is inexplicable unless there be a life beyond the grave. If this were not so, then he felt that this life is not worth the living, and that death would be preferable. So, in the first and last verses of the 34th stanza,

“My own dim life should teach me this,
That life shall live for evermore,
Else earth is darkness at the core,
And dust and ashes all that is;”

If this be not so :

“’Twere best at once to sink to peace,
Like birds the charming serpent draws,
To drop head foremost in the jaws
Of vacant darkness and to cease.”

Nor can I forbear to quote the last two stanzas of that fine poem, “Vastness”—

“What is it all, if we all of us end but in being
our own corpse coffins at last,
Swallowed in Vastness, lost in Silence, drown’d
in the deeps of a meaningless Past?

What but a murmur of gnats in the gloom, or
a moment’s anger of bees in their hive?—

* * * * *

26 *DEATH AND THE FUTURE STATE.*

Peace, let it be ! for I loved him, and love
him for ever : the dead are not dead but
alive."

Another step is reached when to the
thought of consciousness in the after life
is added the belief that the life of the
departed is no mere state of inaction but
one of energy and work in the great offices
of that blessed state. Thus, in the 40th
stanza,

"And doubtless unto thee is given
A life that bears immortal fruit
In such great offices as suit
The full-grown energies of heaven."

And in the 73rd,

"So many worlds, so much to do,
So little done, such things to be,
How know I what had need of thee,
For thou wert strong as thou wert true? "

So far, I suppose, we shall all feel that
Tennyson has carried us with him. In the
44th stanza he enters upon a question of the
kind in which his metaphysical mind de-

lighted, of a kind, however, which must always be wrapped to some extent in uncertainty, and can only be described as speculative. He seeks to know how far the departed can remember the persons and things of this life.

He seems to think that the events of this life would be largely blotted out by death and the new existence of the next, and yet he hopes that there may be gleams of memory in which his friend may think of him.

“How fares it with the happy dead?

For here the man is more and more;

But he (*i.e.*, the dead) forgets the days
before

God shut the doorways of his head.

The days have vanish'd, tone and tint,

And yet perhaps the hoarding sense

Gives out at times (he knows not whence).

A little flash, a mystic hint :

And in the long harmonious years

(If Death so taste Lethean springs,)

May some dim touch of earthly things

Surprise thee ranging with thy peers.

If such a dreamy touch should fall,
O turn thee round, resolve the doubt ;
My guardian angel will speak out
In that high place and tell thee all."

However this may be, the poet is quite clear that the future life is not an unconscious sleep, nor a mere merging of each soul in the general Soul, but the personality will be preserved, and we shall know each other. This is the theme of the 47th stanza—

"That each, who seems a separate whole,
Should move his rounds, and fusing all
The skirts of self again, should fall
Remerging in the general Soul,

Is faith as vague as all unsweet :
Eternal form shall still divide
The eternal soul from all beside ;
And I shall know him when we meet :

And we shall sit at endless feast,
Enjoying each the other's good :
What vaster dream can hit the mood
Of Love on earth? He seeks at least

Upon the last and sharpest height,
Before the spirits fade away,
Some landing place, to clasp and say,
'Farewell! We lose ourselves in light.'"

Another question which exercises the poet is whether the dead have any knowledge of the actions of the living, and, if so, whether they are conscious of our baser side and of our unworthy deeds. If so, will they love us less? Surely not. They too have been tried and tempted; they will feel for us in our temptations, they will love us and watch with the keenest interest the race we run.

"Do we indeed desire the dead
Should still be near us at our side?
Is there no baseness we would hide?
No inner vileness that we dread?
Shall he for whose applause I strove,
I had such reverence for his blame,
See with clear eye some hidden shame
And I be lessen'd in his love?
I wrong the grave with fears untrue:
Shall love be blamed for want of faith?
There must be wisdom with great Death:
The dead shall look me thro' and thro'.

Be near us when we climb or fall :
Ye watch, like God, the rolling hours
With larger other eyes than ours,
To make allowance for us all."

(*Stanza 51.*)

There is no doubt that the death of one dear to us, while still in his youth, adds greatly to the keenness of the trial. We are inclined to murmur that he was, as we say, cut off in his prime. We perhaps forget that with GOD there is no such thing as Time, that, at a given moment, the part which our dear one played in the plan of this life has been played, and there is other work for him to do elsewhere. Then GOD'S finger touches him, and he sleeps to awaken to the activities and work of Paradise.

In the 81st stanza Tennyson seems to have caught and embodied this idea—

"Could I have said while he was here,
 'My love shall now no further range ;
 There cannot come a mellower change,
For now is love mature in ear.'

Love, then, had hope of richer store :
What end is here to my complaint?
This haunting whisper makes me faint,
'More years had made me love thee more.'

But Death returns an answer sweet :
'My sudden frost was sudden gain,
And gave all ripeness to the grain,
It might have drawn from after-heat.'"

Finally, at the close of the poem, we find the poet has reached a quiet assurance as to the future life of the departed and the bliss of their state. Thus, in the 118th stanza,

"Contemplate all this work of Time,
The giant labouring in his youth :
Nor dream of human love and truth,
As dying Nature's earth and lime ;

But trust that those we call the dead
Are breathers of an ampler day
For ever nobler ends."

It remains now to gather up with some brief comments the lessons we have learned on this subject from the poem.

We saw that the author began with a sense of dread and horror of death. Is not this natural to us all? Death is a terrible thing, made more awful by the sense of the unknown which pervades it. There is a well-known anecdote, quoted by the late Dr. Liddon in one of his sermons, which illustrates the awe with which we must enter that unknown land.

“An Indian officer, who in his time had seen a great deal of service, and had taken part in more than one of those decisive struggles by which the British authority was finally established in the East Indies, had returned to end his days in this country, and was talking with his friends about the most striking experiences of his professional career. They led him, by their sympathy and their questions, to travel in memory through a long series of years; and as he described skirmishes, battles, sieges, personal encounters, hairbreadth escapes, the outbreak of the mutiny, and its suppression, reverses, victories—all the

swift alternations of anxiety and hope which a man must know who is entrusted with command, and is before the enemy—their interest in his story, as was natural, became keener and more exacting. At last he paused with the observation, ‘I expect to see something much more remarkable than anything I have been describing.’ As he was some seventy years of age, and was understood to have retired from active service, his listeners failed to catch his meaning. There was a pause; and then he said in an undertone, ‘I mean in the first five minutes after death.’”

Yes, we may well look forward with a reverential awe to the first five minutes after death.

It is, however, the general rule that the actual passing from this life is a peaceful process, a falling asleep.

“GOD’S finger touch’d him and he slept” is Tennyson’s description, no less truthful than beautiful.

But the thought that the future life is

a state of consciousness, full of marvellous activities and high operations, is one of intense interest for us to dwell upon. I do not forget that there have been some who have maintained that the future state was a period of unconscious sleep. It is true that in Holy Scripture Death is often spoken of under the figure of sleep. St. Stephen, after the commendation of his spirit to GOD, "fell asleep."¹ Our Blessed Lord is "the firstfruits of them that slept."² But surely this is figurative language. Our Lord went and "preached to the spirits that were in prison."³ Nor was it to a state of unconscious slumber that He invited the penitent thief; nor, again, would such words describe the feelings of St. Paul when he spoke of "having a desire to depart and to be with Christ."⁴

"The retention of consciousness in the Intermediate State carries with it of necessity the full possession of all other facul-

¹ Acts vii. 60.² 1 Cor. xv. 20.³ 1 Peter iii. 19.⁴ Phil. i. 23.

ties of the mind, for though in this life they are exercised through the medium of bodily organs, they are so far from being dependent on these, that there is good reason to believe that they will be largely developed when freed from their restraining influence.”¹

Thus, for example, we may look for a development of knowledge. “Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”² How much we shall have to learn, and how glorious will be the dawn of light and truth as the mists and shadows of this world roll away before the beams of the Sun of Righteousness! But if the increase of knowledge forms one of the great occupations of the future life, surely the purification of the soul and its growth in sanctification will form the all-important work of each individual. Is there any one of us who can feel, that if it should be the

¹ Luckock, “Intermediate State,” chap. vi. ² 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

Divine Will that GOD's finger should touch him at this moment that he is prepared to pass into the immediate presence of Him Who "dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto"? ¹ Do we not feel that, though we may humbly and firmly believe that we have received pardon for our sins through the precious blood of Jesus Christ, yet that preparation, purification, education, sanctification are sorely needed before we dare to obtrude ourselves into that awful Presence?

The common idea that Death has some subtle power to change the spiritual nature and transform the sinner into a saint is, by a moment's reflection, seen to be false: for Death is a physical process which touches the body, but cannot affect the soul.

It is deeply to be regretted that a section of the Church, by introducing the notion that purification is accompanied by physical pain, has obscured the true idea of

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 16.

the process, and prejudiced the minds of many against it.

The real, spiritual pain, which must be felt even in the midst of peace and joy, a pain which is engendered by the knowledge of the soul's unworthiness and the thought of its past sinfulness, is beautifully expressed in Newman's "Dream of Gerontius"—

"It is the face of the Incarnate God
Shall smite thee with that keen and subtle
pain :
And yet the memory which it leaves will be
A sovereign febrifuge to heal the wound."

"for, though

Now sinless, thou wilt feel that thou hast
sinned,
As never didst thou feel ; and wilt desire
To slink away and hide thee from His sight :
And yet wilt have a longing, aye to dwell
Within the beauty of His countenance,
And these two pains, so counter and so
keen,—
The longing for Him, when thou see'st Him
not :
The shame of self at thought of seeing Him,—
Will be thy veriest, sharpest purgatory."

And yet while we speak, and rightly speak, of the pain caused by the looking back upon the failures and sins of this life, and realizing how different it might have been, we must be very careful to understand that all the time the soul is in a perfect state of peace and happiness. Perhaps we should do better to speak of the feeling as one of education rather than of pain. The old time-honoured prayer, "Requiescat in pace," expresses the true mind of the Church on this point. We can have no doubt that the early Christians were right when they laid their faithful dead in the catacombs, and wrote upon their graves the simple but expressive words, "In pace." "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of GOD, and there shall no torment touch them."

But the purification of the soul is not the only work of the Intermediate State. There are "the great offices," that suit "the full-grown energies of Heaven."

Our Lord carried on in that state the

work in which He was engaged in this world. "He preached to the spirits that were in prison." It is surely no unsafe inference from this that spiritual work begun here, may be continued there. "The influence, the preaching, the ministrations, are not stopped, they are only transferred to another sphere, to be continued with intensified energy under spiritual conditions, though no material ear may hear the voice, no mortal hand shall feel the touch ; they are lost to the Church on earth ; they are gained by the Church in the Intermediate State." ¹

There is a text often quoted, but not always rightly understood, which bears upon this. "Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth ; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; and their works do follow them." ²

There is no doubt that the literal translation of the last clause is, "Their works

¹ Luckock.

² Rev. xiv. 13.

follow with them." The works which they practised in this life follow them into the next, and are practised by them there also.

Our last point is that which was to Tennyson's mind so comforting a certainty. "I shall know him when we meet." This has been a belief common to all ages. The old heathen writers, Homer, Vergil, Plato, Cicero, all held it strongly. The Jewish king consoled himself for the loss of his child by the thought, "I shall go to him."¹ Our Lord cheered the poor penitent thief by His Divine word, "To-day shalt thou be with Me."²

All nature teaches that change of form does not mean loss of identity. The beautiful stalk of wheat differs in form from the tiny grain that was sown, yet their identity is preserved, both are wheat. The glory of the celestial body will not rob the owner of his personal identity with the body of this life.

Thus, if we feel, as we must feel, that

¹ 2 Sam. xii. 23.

² S. Luke xxiii. 43.

Death fills us with awe ; yet we may also feel that it is the portal to another life, a life of pardon, of peace, of sanctification, of growth in knowledge and wisdom, of high and holy occupations, of sweet reunions, and, above all, of a life lighted with the presence of Him, " Whom, having not seen, we love," Who is " The Resurrection and the Life."

III.—*Doubt and Faith.*

EVEN if the biography of Tennyson were not in our hands, we should be able to infer from the internal evidence of this poem that he was a Christian poet. He speaks of Christ as “the Life Indeed” ; “ His power to raise the dead is confessed ; He is the receiver of the souls of the dead into the world beyond this world. He is the Word of GOD that breathed human breath, and wrought out the faith with human deeds.” ¹

To go no further, the first verse of the prologue seems to put this beyond dispute—

“ Strong Son of GOD, immortal Love,
Whom we, that have not seen Thy face,
By faith, and faith alone embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove.”

¹ Stopford Brooke.

“ But it would not be true to say that Tennyson had not to fight for it (this position) against thoughts within, which endeavoured to betray it, and against doubts which besieged it from without. He did not always *repose* in it; he had to fight for it, sword in hand, and many a troublous wound he took. . . . It fell to his lot to live at a time when the faith in immortality has had to run the gauntlet between foes and seeming friends, of a greater variety and of a greater skill than ever before in the history of man.”¹ We can see this struggle in his early poems, pre-eminently in that of “The Two Voices,” but at the date of the conclusion of “In Memoriam” the victory has been won. The poet has fought his doubts and laid them. It is true that fresh difficulties encountered him at a later period of life, which had to be fought in the same way, but with these we have nothing to do now.

But “all through the seventeen years—

¹ Stopford Brooke.

the period covered in writing 'In Memoriam'—a soul knowing its own bitterness, wrapped in profound meditation, tried manfully to beat back its own scepticism by patient, earnest inquiry into the rational grounds for believing that GOD is; that He is personal; that He is essential Justice and Love; that life, with its love and duty, has intrinsic worth and meaning; that destiny is something loftier than the dust." ¹

The 54th stanza shows us something of this struggle—

“Oh yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;
That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroy'd,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When GOD hath made the pile complete;
That not a worm is cloven in vain,
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivel'd in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain.

¹ Sneath.

Behold we know not anything,
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last—far off—at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.

So runs my dream : but what am I ?
An infant crying in the night :
An infant crying for the light :
And with no language but a cry.”

Or again, the concluding verses of the
next two stanzas—

“I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope thro' darkness up to GOD.

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.”

(Stanza 55.)

“O life as futile, then, as frail !
O for thy voice to soothe and bless !
What hope of answer, or redress ?
Behind the veil, behind the veil.”

(Stanza 56.)

The trial of doubt is one that comes to

many, pre-eminently to those who think most deeply.

He who paddles in shallow water is secure of his footing; but as he advances into the deep he is liable to be swept off his feet and carried away.

Honest doubt is not a state of mind for anyone to desire. Happy are those who keep the child-like, simple faith of childhood throughout their lives; but if doubt comes, if the trial is met and faced, the victory won then, the result is generally a stronger faith and an ability to hold out a sympathetic helping hand to those who are passing through the same trial. We do not, must not, seek for illness, but often we are stronger when sickness has come and gone than we were before. Such, I believe, were the thoughts that prompted the 96th stanza—

“You say, but with no touch of scorn,
Sweet-hearted, you, whose light-blue eyes
Are tender over drowning flies,
You tell me, doubt is Devil-born.

I know not : one indeed I knew
In many a subtle question versed
Who touched a jarring lyre at first,
But ever strove to make it true :

Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out.
There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

He fought his doubts and gather'd strength.
He would not make his judgment blind.
He faced the spectres of the mind
And laid them : thus he came at length

To find a stronger faith his own :
And Power was with him in the night,
Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone,

But in the darkness and the cloud,
As over Sinai's peaks of old,
While Israel made their gods of gold,
Altho' the trumpet blew so loud."

Yes, there is such a thing as a formal,
lazy, thoughtless assent to a creed, an
assent which involves no exercise of faith,
and is consequently worthless. And there

is an "honest doubt," which longs to believe, and carries on an earnest wrestling with difficulties until the victory is won. In such an honest doubt there is more of true faith than in the formal, careless acceptance of a creed, which is nothing more than a form of words, and a form which produces little or no effect upon the life of him who subscribes to it.

It is certain that in the past believers have been far too apt "to condemn doubters, as if doubt were wilful and unpardonable sin."

Yet it is a fact "that on the one hand great and good men believe; and on the other hand great and good men doubt." Facts such as these deserve a more just treatment than insolent condemnation or mere insolent ridicule.

There are two ways in which doubt may be, and often is, regarded, each of which errs, though in a different direction.

By some it is condemned as an almost hopeless condition. The terms "sceptic,"

"atheist," etc., often too thoughtlessly applied, stamp the unfortunate person as a kind of spiritual pariah, who should be shunned by all good people.

But Doubt is a matter not for scorn, but for the most compassionate sympathy. It shows that there is a defect in the spiritual part of the doubter's nature, but a defect which may be made good.

"No man on earth is perfect and without defect. The defect sometimes appears in the body, and is a defect of sense; of sight, or hearing, or taste, or speech. Sometimes the defect is in the soul, and produces imperfection of understanding, or emotion, or affection, or will. And sometimes the imperfection is in the spirit, and produces imperfection of faith. . . . As men may be, and sometimes are, without sight or without reason, so likewise may they be, and sometimes are, without faith." ¹

We pity the blind and the mad. We

¹ Diggle.

labour to restore to them their sight and their reason. No less should we have compassion for the unbeliever, and endeavour to help him into the comfort and strength of faith.

But by others Doubt is regarded almost with admiration. It is so much the fashion that it is regarded as a necessity for those who would march with the times. So many intellectual minds have been assailed by it that it is regarded as a sign of intellectual power to be sceptical.

But this is to mistake one thing for another. "Strong minds doubt, but doubt is no proof of strength; noble minds doubt—in these days all the noblest must pass through doubt—but doubt is no proof of nobility. The strength and nobility are shown when the doubts are grappled with till they yield up some hidden treasure of truth." ¹

The "honest doubt" of which Tennyson speaks implies that the doubter

¹ Tainsh.

“Fought his doubts and gathered strength,
He would not make his judgment blind,
He faced the spectres of his mind
And laid them.”

No careful student of this poem can fail to see the importance which the author attaches to faith. He had but little belief in the great verities of religion being capable of proof, nor did he think highly of what is commonly called “the Evidences of Christianity”; but he felt that these great truths were borne in upon the soul by a great wave of faith, which satisfied the believer and gave him rest and peace.

So Professor Sidgwick, writing of this poem, says: “What ‘In Memoriam’ did for us, for me at least, in this struggle, was to impress on us the ineffaceable and ineradicable conviction that *humanity* will not, and cannot, acquiesce in a godless world: the ‘man in men’ will not do this, whatever individual men may do. . . .”

“If the possibility of a ‘godless world’ is excluded, the faith thus restored is, for

the poet, unquestionably a form of Christian faith ; there seems to him then no reason for doubting that the

‘Sinless years

That breathed beneath the Syrian blue,’

and the marvel of the life continued, after the bodily death, were a manifestation of the immortal love which, by faith, we embrace as the essence of the Divine Nature.”

This clear faith felt by the poet, even in the midst of all the darkness of mystery and clouds of doubt, finds its expression in the 124th stanza—

“That which we dare invoke to bless
Our dearest faith : our ghastliest doubt ;
He, They, One, All : within, without ;
The Power in darkness whom we guess :

I found Him not in world or sun,
Or eagle’s wing, or insect’s eye :
Nor thro’ the questions men may try,
The petty cobwebs we have spun :

If e’er when faith had fallen asleep,
I heard a voice ‘believe no more’
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep :

A warmth within the heart would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answer'd 'I have felt.'

No, like a child in doubt and fear :
But that blind clamour made me wise :
Then was I as a child that cries,
But, crying, knows his father near :

And what I am beheld again
What is, and no man understands ;
And out of darkness came the hands
That reach thro' nature, moulding men."

This would seem to be the fitting place to say a few words on the nature of faith.

The nature of man is tripartite. Body, soul or mind and spirit. The body is the material part ; the soul, the intellectual ; the spirit, the highest part, which differentiates man from the rest of the animal creation, and enables him to enter into relation to, and communion with, the Divine Being.

Each of these parts has its own peculiar faculties—*e.g.*, the body has the power of motion, and of exercising the organs of sense. The soul has the intellectual facul-

ties of memory, thought, etc., and the spirit has also its own faculties, among which we may reckon faith.

But we must remember that so intimately are these three parts united that often an action involves the use of all three. Thus an act of prayer may cause the body to assume the humble posture of kneeling, the soul to arrange its thoughts and to express them in words, and the spirit to exercise faith and communion with GOD.

It is, of course, the case that an individual may be defective in one or other of these parts. For example, the organ of hearing may be defective in the body ; the faculty of reasoning in the soul, and the faculty of Faith in the Spirit. It is therefore no proof of the non-existence of Faith because some men do not believe, any more than it would be a proof of the non-existence of sight because some men are blind.

The complete man is he who possesses these three parts of his nature in their en-

tirety. The faculties of each part are cultivated and improved by use. Exercise your reasoning power, and you will reason more accurately ; exercise your faith, and you will strengthen it, till out of weakness it is made strong.

It is thus that "honest doubt" may in the long run prove a blessing. Faith grows strong by grappling with obstacles. Faith is not a heyday of believing what we will. This borders upon credulity. Faith is the grasping of ultimate spiritual realities, and it needs to be tested, tried, chastened, ere it attain its true balance and proportion, and be worthy to rank with reason as the noblest endowment of manhood.

There are splendid heights of assurance reserved for those who win their way thereto by unflinching courage. Spiritual certitudes multiply in strength and sweetness as a man walks humbly with GOD.

Faith is helped and strengthened in different ways.

Many have been helped in their belief by the argument that the wonders of creation demand an Author, Who must be a Being far transcending man in intelligence, in wisdom, and in power. Nor is this argument to be despised. But it did not appeal to Tennyson.

“I found Him not in world or sun,
Or eagle’s wing or insect’s eye.”

“Nothing worthy proving can be proven.” It is here that the venture of Faith must be made. We cannot, with our limited knowledge, escape from difficulties, nor can we hope to solve all the perplexing problems which surround us, but we can believe that the solution will come in the future; we can refuse to acquiesce in the counsels of despair, and as we do this there will arise in our hearts a conviction that “all is well.”

“*Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas.*”¹

¹ Pascal.

Tennyson dreaded the idea of the loss of faith among men. "Take away belief in the self-conscious personality of GOD," he said, "and you take away the backbone of the world."

"On GOD and GOD-like men we build our trust."

Another point in the faith of Tennyson was its great reverence, coupled with its deep humility. Speaking of GOD, he would say, "I dare hardly name His Name," and he would deprecate any rash intrusion into mysteries which are beyond our understanding. Do we not need more of this reverence and humility in the way in which we deal with sacred things? In Dr. Robbins' most valuable and suggestive work, "An Essay toward Faith," he has a chapter on "The Pride of Orthodoxy," from which I must make one quotation, though the whole should be read.

"To know all about Almighty GOD is perhaps a more hopeless state of mind than Agnosticism. GOD mapped out with the

precision of a mathematical demonstration ; Jesus Christ and His Atoning Work fully explicated with the nicety of a scientific definition ; spiritual life elaborated according to the precedents of casuistry until a rule of thumb determines every problem beyond a peradventure ; here is nutriment for pride which shall o'er-top all other vanities of earth. Theology is indeed the queen of sciences. Based upon the revelation of GOD in Jesus Christ, the development of doctrine in the Church has safeguarded the fundamental truths of the Gospel from the rash and perverse speculations of men. The Catholic Faith is a beautifully ordered system, in which the mind, as well as the heart of man, may find infinite delight and satisfaction. There is legitimate certitude in which the faithful rejoice amidst the shifting winds of human opinion. But a dogma may be true without being exhaustive. Though it be based on a fact of revelation, the medium of its expression is still the fallible lan-

guage of earth. Finite terms cannot compass infinite truth. At best a doctrinal definition is but the stammering of children, striving to utter the ineffable. When definition serves to empty Divine truth of its awe and mystery, it is doing the soul a sorry service. Better a reverence which dare not formulate, lest it derogate from truth's dignity, than the shallow self-assurance which would sound the depths of eternity with the plummet of a glib metaphysical statement."

Then as to reverence:

Is it not painful to read the most sacred mysteries of our religion discussed in the columns of the newspapers?

Is there no need for more reverence in the way in which we patter off the well-known words of a familiar prayer or the verses of a favourite hymn?

Is the old idea of the practice of the Presence of GOD quite lost? Was it not a good thing to teach as men used to teach, that the first thing to do in kneeling down

in GOD'S House was to remember that "Surely the Lord is in this place"? Was not the advice of the wise man sound? "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the House of GOD, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools; for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before GOD: for GOD is in Heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few." The very frequency of our Services—rich blessing though it is—is the very source of our danger. So soon as reverence departs and formality enters we do not gain but lose. The sole safeguard is the thought of the Presence of GOD and all that it means.

Men flocked to hear Dr. Newman read the Lessons at Oxford, and Prof. Maurice say the daily Service at the Temple Church, because they felt that there was a reality about their ministrations which impressed them as coming from "priests who were clothed with righteousness."

Faith which is born of humility and sanctified by reverence will lead us into all truth, the peace of GOD will steal into our hearts, all things will be made new, according to the promise of Christ, and we shall know Him as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

“O Living Will that shalt endure
When all that seems shall suffer shock,
Rise in the spiritual rock.
Flow thro' our deeds and make them pure ;

That we may lift from out of dust
A voice as unto him that hears
A cry above the conquer'd gears
To one, that with us works, and trust.

With faith that comes of self-control,
The truths that never can be proved
Until we close with all we loved,
And all we flow from, soul in soul.”

(*Stanza 131.*)

IV.—God.

WE have seen that Tennyson's belief in GOD was to him a matter of faith, and not a matter of proof.

There is, as he thought, a domain of knowledge and a domain of faith. These are not contradictory. The domain of faith lies beyond the domain of knowledge. Knowledge is confined to what can be known by the senses or demonstrated by the reason. But beyond the limits of sense and reason there lies the great world of reality, which can be entered only by faith.

So in the Prologue—

“Strong Son of GOD, immortal Love
Whom we, that have not seen Thy face,
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing, where we cannot prove.”

And further on—

“We have but faith; we cannot know,
For knowledge is of things we see :
And yet we trust it comes from Thee,
A beam in darkness: let it grow.”

In another poem, “The Ancient Sage,” the same idea is worked out at greater length. In the biography of Tennyson we are told that the poet himself said of this poem: “The whole poem is very personal. The passages about ‘Faith’ and ‘The Passion of the Past’ were more especially my own personal feelings.” We may therefore fairly quote this poem as illustrating Tennyson’s thoughts and views. It is not possible to do more than indicate passages, which it is hoped the reader will peruse in full in the original. The poem narrates a conversation between an ancient sage and a rich young man, “worn from wasteful living.” The youth has in his hand a scroll of verse, which the sage asks permission to read. And this is what he reads:

“How far thro’ all the bloom and brake
That nightingale is heard!
What power but the bird’s could make
This music in the bird?
How summer bright are yonder skies,
And earth as fair in hue!
And yet what sign of aught that lies
Behind the green and blue?
But man to-day is fancy’s fool
As man hath ever been,
The nameless Power, or Powers, that rule
Were never heard or seen.”

Here we have a thorough unbelief in the existence of GOD, or, at best, an admission that there may be some nameless Power or Powers, but that man is but the fool of his fancy if he thinks that he can apprehend the Power.

The reply of the sage is expressed in some of the noblest lines that Tennyson ever wrote, beginning as follows:

“If thou would’st hear the Nameless, and wilt
dive
Into the Temple-cave of thine own self,
There, brooding by the central altar, thou
May’st haply learn the Nameless hath a voice,

By which thou wilt abide if thou be wise,
As if thou knewest, tho' thou canst not know ;
For Knowledge is the swallow on the lake
That sees and stirs the surface-shadow there."

We note in this passage that it is not by knowledge that we apprehend GOD, for knowledge does but skim, like a swallow, upon the surface of the water ; but by faith in the inmost depths of our own being we can hear the voice of the Nameless.

The sage now continues to read the roll, which demands proof of the existence of the Nameless ; when he breaks off he interjects this reply :

"Thou canst not prove the Nameless, O my
son,
Nor canst thou prove the world thou movest
in,
Thou canst not prove that thou art body alone,
Nor canst thou prove that thou are spirit
alone,
Nor canst thou prove that thou art both in
one :

* * * * *

For nothing worthy proving, can be proven,
Nor yet disproven ; wherefore thou be wise,
Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,
And cling to faith, beyond the forms of Faith ! ”

Here again the poet is dwelling upon the thought that GOD cannot be proved, but the power of faith can penetrate where those of knowledge and reason fail.

These extracts show clearly Tennyson's position. As we have said before, the argument from design did not appeal to him, nor did philosophical arguments commend themselves to his mind.

“ Nor thro' the questions men may try
The petty cobwebs we have spun.”

For him, the existence of GOD is necessary for the satisfaction of the demands of the human race. “ With a clear acknowledgment that there is no purpose behind the changes of things, and no working towards an end, all striving must become aimless, and life eventually intolerable.” ¹

¹ Masterman.

Some are led to the Truth by one path ; others by another. We need not think that the arguments which were voiceless to Tennyson have necessarily no message for others. A great preacher has said, " There are three great postulates of reason—the existence of self, of the world, of GOD." ¹

No doubt this is true, and yet it may be helpful to make a brief digression from Tennyson's views and to indicate certain lines of thought which have undoubtedly helped many towards Faith.

There is, first, the fact that the idea of a Deity is everywhere rooted in the mind of man. "A nation of pure Atheists is yet to be discovered. Unworthy and degraded as are many of the beliefs on the subject of a Higher Power that are to be found in the heathen world, some groping after the great unseen, some tentative intuition, some shadowy belief there is to be found always and everywhere. Man

¹ Bishop Alexander.

thinks of a Higher Power as he thinks of the world around him or of himself.”¹

Secondly, as man looks out upon the Universe he seeks for its productive cause. “What cause, what force preceded and brought into existence this Universe? All the causes with which we come in contact here are, as we term them, second causes ; but they point to a cause beyond themselves, to a cause of causes, to a supreme all-producing Cause, Itself uncaused, un-originated. . . . The whole universe bids us look beyond itself for the adequate explanation of its existence. . . . ‘How do you know,’ a Bedouin was asked, ‘that there is a GOD?’ ‘In the same way,’ he replied, ‘that I know, on looking at the sand, when a man or a beast has crossed the desert—by His footprints in the world around me.’”²

Thirdly, there is another line of thought which proceeds from the contemplation of

¹ Liddon, “Some Elements of Religion.”

² “Some Elements of Religion,” Liddon.

our own being. The voice of conscience bears perpetual witness to us that we ought to abhor evil and to do good. It also affirms that if we are virtuous we should be happy. "Yet, in the experience of life, the good man who does good is often unhappy, while vice is not unfrequently salaried and crowned with rewards that are denied to virtue. The sight of this contradiction forces the conscience to infer a life to come, and a Moral Being, Who, in His justice, will re-establish those relations between happiness and virtue which it persistently recognizes as necessary."¹

Let us now return to Tennyson's views, and learn some of his thoughts concerning the Divine Being.

To him, GOD was a *Personal* GOD: no force, no tendency, no vague abstraction, but a Living, Loving, Personal Being.

The last stanza in the poem may be quoted in support of this—

¹ Liddon.

“That GOD, Which ever lives and loves,
One GOD, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves.”

GOD was no blind force, put forward to account for the existence of the world and then withdrawn, allowing the machinery of the Universe to grind along as best it could by itself, but a Personal Being, working out His own great purpose and watching over His own creation.

“Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit
with Spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than
hands and feet.”¹

He was asked to write the words of an anthem about GOD, and he wrote “The Human Cry.”

“Hallowed be Thy Name—Hallelujah!—
Infinite Ideality!
Immeasurable Reality!
Infinite Personality!
Hallowed be Thy Name—Hallelujah!

¹ The Higher Pantheism.

We feel we are nothing—for all is Thou and
in Thee :

We feel we are something—that also has come
from Thee ;

We know we are nothing—but Thou wilt help
us to be.

Hallowed be Thy Name—Hallelujah ! ”

To the idea of Personality, Tennyson
added that of Love.

“ That Love which is and was
My Father and my Brother and my GOD.” ¹

Thus, in the 126th stanza,

“ Love is and was my Lord and King,
And in His presence I attend
To hear the tidings of my friend,
Which every hour his couriers bring.

Love is and was my King and Lord,
And will be, tho’ as yet I keep
Within His court on earth, and sleep
Encompass’d by His faithful guard,

And hear at times a sentinel
Who moves about from place to place,
And whispers to the worlds of space,
In the deep night that all is well.”

¹ Doubt and Prayer.

It is true that at times he was troubled by the problem of the apparent waste of life, and by the vast amount of sin and suffering throughout the world.

Thus, in these lines—

“O me! for why is all around us here
As if some lesser god had made the world,
But had not force to shape it as He would,
Till the high GOD behold it from beyond,
And enter it, and make it beautiful?”

It is a problem which has perplexed many. If Tennyson has presented it to us in the beauty of his verse, Newman has done the same in the majesty of his prose.

“To consider the world in its length and breadth, its various history, the many races of men, their starts, their fortunes, their mutual alienation, their conflicts; and then their ways, habits, governments, forms of worship, their enterprises, their aimless courses, their random achievements and acquirements, the impotent conclusion of long-standing facts, the tokens so faint and broken of a superintending design,

the blind evolution of what turn out to be great powers or truths, the progress of things, as if from unreasoning elements, not towards final causes, the greatness and littleness of man, his far-reaching aims, his short duration, the curtain hung over his futurity, the disappointments of life, the defeat of good, the success of evil, physical pain, mental anguish, the prevalence and intensity of sin, the pervading idolatries, the corruptions, the dreary, hopeless irreligion, that condition of the whole race so fearfully yet exactly described in the Apostle's words, 'having no hope and without GOD in the world'—all this is a vision to dizzy and appal, and inflicts upon the mind a sense of a profound mystery, which is absolutely beyond human solution."¹

But if such thoughts troubled Tennyson at times, as they have troubled others, if he felt "the sense of a profound mystery," and was appalled by the dizzy vision, it was only for a time.

¹ Newman's "Apologia."

"After one of these moods," we are told in his life, "he exclaimed—Yet GOD *is* love, transcendent, all pervading! We do not get this faith from Nature or the World. . . . We get this faith from ourselves, from what is highest within us, which recognizes that there is not one fruitless pang, just as there is not one lost good."

So in a short poem, entitled "Faith"—

"Doubt no longer that the Highest is the wisest
and the best,
Let not all that saddens Nature blight thy
hope or break thy rest,
Quail not at the fiery mountain, at the ship-
wreck, or the rolling
Thunder, or the rending earthquake, or the
famine, or the pest!"

And so in the 54th stanza of our poem—

"Oh yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood."

* * * * *

“Behold, we know not anything
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last—far off—at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.”

Tennyson's attitude, therefore, was to admit that there is much in the mystery of suffering we cannot understand, but nevertheless to hold firmly to the belief that GOD is Love, and that the mystery will be solved when we no longer “know in part,” but “know even as we are known.”

But may we not go a step further than this, and say, in all humility, that we are permitted to see a little way into this mystery, at least far enough to understand that pain and suffering serve a purpose, a merciful purpose, and that in permitting them to exist, and to do their work in this world, GOD is proving Himself a GOD of Love.

We can see the necessity for pain as a warning force. If pain were not the consequence of injurious actions, how could men be taught to refrain from them?

We can see the necessity for pain for the development of character.

We can see the necessity for pain in the reign of law.

“It seems hard, no doubt it is hard, that a mother should lose her darling child by accident or disease, and that she cannot, by any agony of prayer, recall the child to life. But it would be harder for the world if she could. The child has died through a violation of some of Nature’s laws: and if such violation were ever unattended with death, men would lose all inducement to discover and obey them. It seems hard, no doubt, that girls, young and innocent, like Kate and Lily, whom Walter Besant so graphically describes in ‘Katharine Regina,’ it is hard that they should be so destitute and wretched. Lily says to her friend, ‘We have done no harm to anybody, why are we so horribly punished? I have prayed for hours in the night; I have torn out my heart with prayer; I have prayed till I felt my words echoed back from

the senseless rocks.' It is hard for the individual that such prayers are not answered ; but it would be harder for the world if they were. The miraculous providing of food and comfort for one person would lead all others to expect a miraculous provision. . . . It seems hard, it is hard, that children are made to suffer for their fathers' crimes. But it would be harder for the world if they were not. If the father's wrong-doing were averted from the children, men would lose the strongest motive to do right."

Manifestly, then, there is a reason, and a good reason, for some of the pain in the world. "And the fact that we can see a reason for *some* suffering affords a logical basis for the hope that there *are* reasons—though as yet undiscovered—for all."¹

In the belief that GOD is Good, and that GOD is Love, we must be content to leave the problem partly solved until we are brought "behind the veil," and the dim twilight of this world is exchanged for the endless, glorious noonday of the City of God.

¹ Momerie on Pessimism.

V.—God and His Purpose.

WE have seen that Tennyson believed in a Personal GOD, and in a GOD Who is Love. We must now add to this the further belief that GOD is no indifferent spectator of all that is going on in the world, but that He is working out a great purpose, that all is “co-operant to an end,” and bringing about that

“One far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves.”

Tennyson was an ardent advocate of the principle of Evolution. When first this principle was stated it came with a shock upon a great part of the religious world. It seemed to many to minimize the power of the Deity, and to remove Him almost, if not altogether, from His place as the

Creator of the World. With Tennyson the effect was just the contrary. Behind all the changes of Nature, all the discoveries of science, all the events of history, he could see a guiding hand bringing order out of chaos, and developing all things in the direction of the end He had in view.

So in the 128th stanza—

“ The love that rose on stronger wings
Unpalsied when he met with Death,
Is comrade of the lesser faith
That sees the course of human things.

No doubt vast eddies in the flood
Of onward time shall yet be made,
And throned races may degrade;
Yet, O ye mysteries of good,

Wild Hours that fly with Hope and Fear,
If all your office had to do
With old results that look like new;
If this were all your mission here,

To draw, to sheathe a useless sword,
To fool the crowd with glorious lies,
To cleave a creed in sects and cries,
To change the bearing of a word,

To shift an arbitrary power,
To cramp the student at his desk,
To make old bareness picturesque
And tuft with grass a feudal tower ;

Why then my scorn might well descend
On you and yours. I see in part
That all, as in some piece of art,
Is toil co-operant to an end."

Yes, "toil co-operant to an end," and that end will be achieved when the Kingdom of GOD comes in all its fulness, and the earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Is not this the vision we have in the last chapters of Holy Scripture?

The new Heaven and the new earth: the Holy City, in which shall be "no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." A City whose purity can only be likened to the flawless transparency of the clearest gems, whose characteristics are perfect beauty, radiant light, and absolute holiness. From it is banished all evil. "There shall in

no wise enter into it anything that defileth." But the tree of life, and the river of the water of life give to its inhabitants the gift of life in its highest sense, life everlasting.

It is, no doubt, very difficult for us to trace the working out of this purpose, because we only see such an infinitesimal part, both in time and space, of the progress of the work.

We are constantly brought face to face with sad, sorrowful, and sinful deeds, which make us wonder why such things should be permitted. We forget that it is impossible for us to see the gradual onward march of progress towards the "one far-off divine event."

But it is well for us to try and realize that behind so much that seems unintelligible, GOD is working out His own end, and that if, as must be the case,

"The old order changeth, yielding place to
new,"

yet it is also true that

"GOD fulfils Himself in many ways."

Tennyson has brought this out in a striking passage in "Sea Dreams," describing the vision of the wife—

“Round the North, a light,
A belt, it seem'd, of luminous vapour, lay,
And ever in it a low musical note
Swell'd up and died; and as it swell'd, a ridge
Of breaker issued from the belt, and still
Grew with the growing note, and when the note
Had reached a thunderous fulness, on those
cliffs

Broke, mixed with awful light (the same as that
Living within the belt), whereby she saw
That all those lines of cliffs were cliffs no more,
But huge cathedral fronts of every age,
Grave, florid, stern, as far as eye could see,
One after one: and then the great ridge drew,
Lessening to the lessening music, back
And pass'd into the belt and swell'd again
Slowly to music: ever when it broke
The statues, king or saint, or founder fell:
Then from the gaps and chasms of ruin left
Came men and women in dark clusters round,
Some crying, 'Set them up! they shall not
fall!'

And others, 'Let them lie, for they have
fall'n!'

And still they strove and wrangled: and she
grieved

In her strange dream, she knew not why, to
find

Their wildest wailings never out of tune
With that sweet note; and ever as their shrieks
Ran highest up the gamut, that great wave
Returning, while none mark'd it, on the crowd
Broke, mixt with awful light, and show'd their
eyes

Glaring, and passionate looks, and swept away
The men of flesh and blood, and men of stone
To the waste deeps together."

It is a striking picture. We see the changes, the passing away of old forms and customs, once so highly venerated, the consternation with which some view the dissolution of things that seemed so lasting. We hear the loud outcry of party strife and the din of party warfare, and yet amidst all there is the sweet "note never out of tune," the purpose of GOD steadily working itself out in a progress towards its appointed end.

If there is a gradual working out of this purpose in the world, so must there also be in mankind. Gradually, but

surely, man must "work out the beast,"
and "let the ape and tiger die,"

"That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things."

This is the thought that is contained in
the 118th stanza.

"They say

The solid earth whereon we tread
In tracts of fluent heat began,
And grew to seeming-random forms,
The seeming prey of cyclic storms,
Till at the last arose the man ;

Who throve and branch'd from clime to clime,
The herald of a higher race,
And of himself in higher place,
If so he type this work of time

Within himself, from more to more ;
Or crown'd with attributes of woe
Like glories, move his course, and show
That life is not an idle ore,

But iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
And batter'd with the shocks of doom

To shape and use. Arise and fly
The reeling Faun, the sensual feast ;
Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die."

Yes, surely all the events of this world are working together to school mankind into a higher life, the life of love. GOD is Love. Man is made in the image of GOD, therefore man must learn that Love is the very Nature of GOD, and that to draw near to GOD is to dwell in the very atmosphere of love. As Browning says—

"For life with all it yields of joy and woe, and
hope and fear,
Is just our chance, o' the prize of learning
love—
How love might be, hath been indeed, and
is."

But you say there is very little love in the world. Nation goes to war with nation. Tyranny, injustice and greed grind down their victims, and in their names nameless deeds are daily done. In the Church of Christ itself party-spirit,

bitter hatred, and scarcely veiled persecution stalk abroad. It is too true, and yet those who think most deeply tell us that all these horrors are calling forth self-sacrificing love on the part of many, and are gradually but surely teaching men that Love is the better way.

The evolution of love is steadily going on. All thoughtful persons recognize its value and its beauty. "The number of self-sacrificing men and women, the number of those who have merged their own life and well-being in the life and well-being of the race is continually on the increase."¹ And assuredly the time is coming when there will be a reign of love in humanity as invariable and as universal as the present reign of law in Nature.

That is

"The one far-off Divine event
Towards which the whole creation moves."

¹ Momerie.

VI.—The Christ.

WHEN Tennyson was asked for his views about Jesus Christ, he answered that they were to be found in "In Memoriam."

The Prologue, the 36th stanza, and a small part of the 106th contain these views; but scanty though the matter may be, it is sufficient to show us how the Christian position had penetrated into the Poet's mind and heart. It would be hard to find clearer witness to the Incarnation of our Lord, and the Incarnation is the key to the Christian position. Grant the Incarnation, and the rest of the Creed follows naturally. Indeed, of what purpose would have been the Incarnation without the rest?

We will read the first four verses of the Prologue:

“ Strong Son of GOD, immortal Love,
Whom we, that have not seen Thy face,
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove ;

Thine are these orbs of light and shade ;
Thou madest Life in man and brute ;
Thou madest Death ; and lo, Thy foot
Is on the skull which Thou hast made.

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust :
Thou madest man, he knows not why ;
He thinks he was not made to die ;
And Thou hast made him : Thou art just.

Thou seemest human and divine,
The highest, holiest manhood, Thou :
Our wills are ours, we know not how :
Our wills are ours, to make them Thine.”

We now turn to the 36th stanza—

“ Tho’ truths in manhood darkly join,
Deep-seated in our mystic frame.
We yield all blessing to the Name
Of Him that made them current coin ;

For Wisdom dealt with mortal powers,
Where truth in closest words shall fail.
When truth embodied in a tale
Shall enter in at lowly doors.

And so the Word had breath, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds
In loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought :

Which he may read that binds the sheaf,
Or builds the house, or digs the grave,
And those wild eyes that watch the wave
In roarings round the coral reef."

Surely no one can read these passages without feeling that Tennyson believed heartily in the Incarnation of the Son of GOD—Human and Divine—"Who wrought the creed of creeds in loveliness of perfect deeds."

"A visitor once ventured to ask him, as they were walking in the garden, what he thought of our Saviour. He said nothing at first ; then he stopped by a beautiful flower, and said, 'What the sun is to that flower, Jesus Christ is to my soul. He is the Sun of my soul.' His niece, Miss Weld, among other touching recollections of her uncle, says that he often dwelt in his talks upon the special nearness of Christ to him in the Holy Communion."

Tennyson's special contribution to religious thought does not lie in the fresh exposition of theological subtleties so much as the "reiteration and enforcement of certain fundamental and central beliefs, enshrined in that exquisite choice of pure English of which he was such a master—beliefs and truths that seem to be ever welling up from the depths of his consciousness, and from life-long experience of their vital importance to have become a part of his very being.

"This is indeed a boon which it is scarcely possible to over-estimate in an age when nothing has been thought too solemn or too sacred to be called in question, and canvassed and pronounced upon in almost oracular language by the ephemeral literature of the magazine or newspaper. In this aspect Tennyson must be regarded as a true *Vates*—prophet as well as poet—to his generation, and to those that are to come. For, again and again, we believe that in the future men and women, jaded

with the toil and hurry incident to modern civilization, stunned and perplexed by the many distracting voices around them, will return for calm and repose to those serene galleries peopled with the stately creatures of his imagination, and vocal with utterances full of elevated thought—a constant source of strength and consolation, of inspiration and joy, to uplift from the earth, and at the same time to nerve for the most strenuous performance of daily duty.”¹

We have seen that our poet felt and expressed a very true and loving belief in our Incarnate Lord, in His creed of creeds, and in His sinless life. We must next ask what was that special aspect of the Incarnate Christ which appealed most to Tennyson.

In fact, when he wrote the line—

“Ring in the Christ that is to be”

what were the thoughts that were suggested to his mind by “the Christ that is to be”?

¹ Ozanan “*Études Germaniques*.”

For nothing is clearer to the student of Church History than that in every age the Christ has been the central figure of attraction and the central factor in thought to Christians: yet the aspect of Christianity, that is, the way in which the Christ has affected the thoughts and lives of people, has varied very considerably; so that the history of the Church presents a series of pictures of Christian life, different from each other, yet each witnessing to some truth, though often overlaid with the errors and weaknesses of its particular age.

“The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And GOD fulfils Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the
world.”

Thus in the third century we have the Hermits, who in their love for the Christ fled from the awful wickedness of that wicked epoch, and led in the solitude of the desert a pure and simple life.

It was a protest which was most useful

at the time, but it was not the ideal Christian life, not the permanent expression of Christianity. Christ's disciples were to leaven the world in which they lived, not to stand aside from that world and leave it to its fate.

The Hermits were followed by the Monks. "At the close of the fifth century the wild bands of Gothic barbarians were shattering the political fabric of the Empire to pieces. Amid homeless men, amid depopulated provinces, amid perishing institutions, amid the rising deluges of heathenism and barbarity, 'a type of common life,' says Bishop Westcott, 'was needed to preserve the inheritance of the old world and to offer a rallying point for the Christian forces that should fashion the new.'

"What was it that had preserved the best elements of Christianity in the fourth century? The self-sacrifice of the hermits. What was it which saved the principles of law and order and civilization? What rescued the wreck of ancient literature

from the universal conflagration? What kept alive the dying embers of science? What fanned into a flame the white ashes of art? What redeemed waste lands; cleared forests, drained fens, protected miserable populations, encouraged free labour? What was the sole witness for the cause of charity, the sole preservative of even partial education, the sole rampart against intolerable oppression? What weak and unarmed power alone retained the strength and the determination to dash down the mailed hand of the baron when it was uplifted against his serf, to proclaim a truce of GOD between warring violences, and to make insolent wickedness tremble by asserting the inherent supremacy of goodness over transgression, of knowledge over ignorance, of quiet righteousness over brutal force? You will say the Church; you will say Christianity. Yes, but for many a long century the very bulwarks and ramparts of the Church were the monasteries, and the one invincible

force of the Church lay in the self-sacrifice, the holiness, the courage of the monks.

"Poverty, chastity, obedience had always been the triple vow of the monk—poverty in ages which were dying of opulence; chastity, in an age weakened by orgies; obedience, in an age perishing of disorders."¹

This was the aspect of the Christian life which presented itself to them, an aspect most useful for the days in which they lived and bore their witness.

But again the scene shifts, and we have the age of the Franciscans, with their speaking and stirring protest against the worldliness and luxury which was sapping the life of the clergy, and so of the Church. To them the conception of the Christ and the Christian life was contained in the words: "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses; neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves. And as ye go preach, saying: The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

¹ Farrar's "Saintly Workers."

These instances will be sufficient to show what I mean. Let us return to the question, What was the aspect presented by Tennyson in "the Christ that is to be"?

If you will read the 106th stanza carefully I think you will see that what Tennyson wishes to teach is the duty of translating the Christian creed into action. When this is done, when our belief influences our deeds, when we live the kind of life that we profess to believe in, then indeed a new era will set in, an era of truth, of charity, of nobler modes of life, of sweeter manners, of peace, of kindliness, of the teaching of the Christ expressed in the lives of Christ's people.

The age in which we live is distinctly a social age, and its problems are social problems. It is for us Christians to see that the social problems can only be solved by the teaching of the Christ lived out in our own lives and applied to the lives of others. For "there is no department of human life and action in Christen-

dom which has not something to tell us of the influence which His character has exerted in the world. . . . It is true that He left no writing behind Him ; but what literature would remain, if we were to give up all in which the influence of His teaching could be detected? He was neither poet nor musician ; but poet and musician alike have, in innumerable instances, borrowed from His life the inspiration which has enabled them to accomplish their best work. He contributed nothing to architecture, nothing to art ; but to His honour, and for the better realization of His abiding presence, have been erected the noblest buildings the world has seen, and sculptors and painters have vied with each other in perpetuating His memory and His influence. He kept aloof from all politics, and promulgated no schemes for the redress of social evils ; but far and wide, in civilized and in heathen lands, wherever His teaching has become known and His character has been understood, slavery and

oppression have tended to disappear, and justice and mercy to take their place.”¹

It is by realizing the kind of character which the Christ put before His people as the character for His disciples, and then living out that character in our daily life, that we shall, each one of us, help to ring in “the Christ that is to be.”

This character is delineated with beautiful simplicity in the Beatitudes.

The Blessed Life is lived by those who, so far from setting their hearts upon riches, sit lightly to the things of this world, and are “poor in spirit”: by those who worthily lament their own sins and are ever ready to enter into the sorrows of others with sympathy and aid—“They that mourn”; by those who are meek and gentle, even under provocation; by those who strongly crave for all that is right, true, and good, who “hunger and thirst after righteousness”; by those who are

¹“Human Nature a Revelation of the Divine.” C. H. Robinson.

merciful, who, realizing how often they fall themselves, are ready to look with pity and forgiveness on the falls of others ; by those who are pure in heart, single-minded, absolutely intent upon goodness and the service of GOD ; by those who, among all the strife and malice of this world, are peacemakers ; and by those who are ready to stand by these principles at the risk of unpopularity, of scorn, possibly of persecution.

This is a sadly imperfect sketch ; yet it may give us food for thought.

This is the kind of character that the Christ desires His people to form, and then this character expressed in the life will have its influence and effect upon others. It will be the salt that will purify ; the Light that will burn in the darkness ; the city that is set on a hill, which must arrest attention.

If all of us Christians were aiming at such a life as this, Christianity would be an irresistible torrent that would carry everything before it. It is because we lower

our ideals, because we are too fond of the things of this world, to become poor in spirit ; too unconscious of our sinfulness to mourn for it ; too full of party-spirit and controversialism to be meek ; too careless of righteousness to hunger and thirst for it ; too easily offended to be merciful ; too fond of ourselves and our pleasures to be pure in heart ; too quarrelsome to be peacemakers ; too cowardly to stand persecution. Thus the Kingdom of Christ does not make the progress it should, and the fault is with us, His people.

Can we have any better work than to draw near in penitence for the past to the foot of the Cross, and to draw fresh teaching and new grace for the future, that we may go forth to "ring in the Christ that is to be." Some of you may remember the description which is given in the life of F. W. Robertson, of the effect which the study of Christ's life produced upon his.

"The Incarnation was to him the centre of all history. The life which followed

the Incarnation was the explanation of the Life of God, and the only solution of the problem of the life of man. He did not speak much of loving Christ ; his love was fitly mingled with that veneration which made love perfect . . . he paused before he spoke His Name in common talk ; for what that Name meant had become the central thought of his intellect and the deepest realization of his spirit. He had spent a world of study, of reverent meditation, of adoring contemplation on the Gospel history. Nothing comes forward more visibly in his letters than the way in which he had entered into the human life of Christ. To that everything is referred—by that everything is explained. The gossip of a drawing-room, the tendencies of the time, the religious questions of the day . . . the loneliness and the difficulties of his work, were not so much argued upon or combated, as at once and instinctively brought to the test of a life which was lived out eighteen centuries ago, but which went

everywhere with him. Out of this intuitive reception of Christ, and from this ceaseless silence of meditation which makes the blessedness of great love, there grew up in him a deep comprehension of the whole, as well as a minute sympathy with all the delicate details of the character of Christ. Day by day, with passionate imitation, he followed his Master, musing on every action, revolving in thought the interdependence of all that Christ had said or done, weaving into the fibres of his heart the principles of the Life he worshipped, till he had received into his being the very impression and image of that unique personality. His very doctrines were the life of Christ expressed in words. The Incarnation, Atonement and Resurrection of Christ were not dogmas to him. In himself he was daily realizing them. They were in him a life, a power, a light."

I could not find fitter words to express what I mean, nor a better wish with which to conclude these thoughts, than that some

such conception may be ours, and that such an ideal conceived in our hearts may be carried out in our lives.

“Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light :
The year is dying in the night ;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow :
The year is going, let him go ;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more ;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife ;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times ;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite ;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease ;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold ;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free
The larger heart, the kindlier hand ;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be."

THE END.





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